

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 PM-03 L-01

IO-06 /042 W

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R 131208Z NOV 76 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1985
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 1194

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, QA

SUBJ: QATAR INTERNAL AFFAIRS: FOREIGN MINISTER RESUMES
FUNCTIONS AND APPARENTLY FACES DOWN AMIR

REF: DOHA 1184, DOHA 1174

1. SUMMARY: QATARI FOREIGN MINISTER HAS RESUMED HIS FUNCTIONS, APPARENTLY WITH ASSISTANCE OF GOOD OFFICES OF SAUDI CROWN PRINCE FAHD, AND HIS SUCCESSFUL DEFIANCE OF AMIR. FORMIN'S PERSISTENT PRESSING OF CLAIM TO CROWN PRINCE-SHIP WILL CONTINUE TO ROIL INTERNAL WATERS AND HIS FACEDOWN OF AMIR COULD MUMINISH LATTER'S AUTHORITY AND PRESTIGE. LONG PROMISED GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION COULD ASSIST AMIR IN RECOUPING HIS DETERIORATING AUTHORITY. END SUMMARY

2. GOQ FOREIGN MINISTER AND AMIR'S HALF-BROTHER, SHAYKH SUHAYM BIN HAMAD AL THANI, HAS RESUMED HIS MINISTERIAL DUTIES AFTER SULKING FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS ON HIS DESERT FARM BECAUSE OF HIS BITTER DISPUTE WITH AMIR OVER SUHAYM'S CLAIM TO CROWN
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PRINCESHIP. SUHAYM RECEIVED COPY OF CREDENTIALS OF NEWLY

ARRIVED INDIAN AMB ON NOV 10, AND PARTICIPATED IN CREDENTIALS PRESENTATION TO AMIR FOLLOWING DAY. BOTH EVENTS RECEIVED FEATURED TV AND OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE. SUHAYM ALSO ATTENDED REGULAR WEEKLY CABINET SESSION ON NOV 10. "RETURN OF SUHAYM" APPARENTLY ARRANGED DURING NOV 8-9 VISIT OF SAUDI CROWN PRINCE FAHD.

3. ON NOV 13 WE QUERIED DR HASSAN KAMEL, AMIR'S SENIOR POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, ON BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS OF APPARENT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN AMIR AND SUHAYM. KAMEL ADMITTED THAT HE HAD BEEN SKEPTICAL THAT RIFT COULD BE HEALED SO SWIFTLY, AND ACKNOWLEDGED OBVIOUS CONNECTION WITH FAHD VISIT. KAMEL COMMENTED, HOWEVER, THAT SUHAYM HAD EFFECTIVELY FACED DOWN THE AMIR, WITH ATTENDANT LOSS OF FACE FOR LATTER. ACCORDING KAMEL, SUHAYM HAD REBUFFED AMIR'S REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO BRING HIM AROUND THROUGH SERIES OF INTERMEDIARIES, AND HAD RESPONDED ONLY TO COUNSEL FROM SAUDI BIG BROTHER. SUHAYM'S SUCCESSFUL DEFIANCE, SAID KAMEL, COULD NOT HELP BUT DIMINISH AMIR'S PRESTIGE WITHIN RULING FAMILY AND COUNTRY. ACCORDING KAMEL, SUHAYM ALREADY EXPLOITING HIS ADVANTAGE TO IMPROVE HIS OWN POWER POSITION, AND THIS SUCCESS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY WIN HIM INCREASED SUPPORT WITHIN THE FAMILY FOR HIS OWN PERSISTENT EFFORTS TO BE DESIGNATED CROWN PRINCE. KAMEL SAID THAT SUHAYM HAD FLATLY AND RUDELY REJECTED AMIR'S BUY-OFF OFFER OF PRIME MINISTER-SHIP, AND HAD VOWED THAT IF HE WAS NOT TO BE CROWN PRINCE, HE WOULD DO HIS UTMOST TO SEE THAT NO ONE IS NAMED. KAMEL OBSERVED THAT SO FAR SUHAYM'S STRATEGY HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

4. KAMEL STATED THAT CROWN PRINCE COMPETITION NOW BETWEEN SUHAYM AND SHAYKH HAMAD BIN KHALIFA AL THANI, AMIR'S ELDEST SON AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES. HE NOTED THAT SHAYKH ABDUL AZIZ BIN KHALIFA AL THANI, AMIR'S SECOND SON AND MINISTER OF FINANCE AND PETROLEUM, HAD BEEN BUMPED OUT OF RACE AND APPEARED TO BE ACCEPTING THIS GRACEFULLY, ALTHOUGH HE REMAINED AMIR'S FAVORITE CANDIDATE. AS BETWEEN HAMAD AND SUHAYM, KAMEL OPINED THAT HAMAD HAD GREATER POPULAR FOLLOWING, ALTHOUGH SUHAYM APPEARED TO HAVE SAUDI SUPPORT, SINCE SAUDI SUCCESSION PATTERN WAS FROM BROTHER TO BROTHER RATHER THAN FROM FATHER TO SON.

5. KAMEL SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD REPORTS THAT PRICE SUHAYM
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EXACTED FOR HIS RECONCILIATION WITH AMIR WAS PROMISE OF CROWN PRINCE-SHIP. HE RECALLED THAT IN ORDER TO SECURE SUHAYM'S SUPPORT FOR HIS 1972 COUP AGAINST FORMER RULER, AMIR HAD PROMISED SUHAYM CROWN PRINCE-SHIP, AND AMIR'S WELSHING ON PROMISE WAS CAUSE OF SUHAYM'S BITTERNESS AND DEFIANCE. KAMEL SAID IT WAS HIS VIEW THAT AMIR HAD NOTED TO DESIGNATE SUHAYM CROWN PRINCE

AS PAYOFF FOR HIS RETURN TO THE FOLD, AND THAT AMIR WOULD

CONTINUE TO AVOID DESIGNATING HIS SUCCESSOR AS HE HAS BEEN
DOING FOR OVER FOUR YEARS.

6. AS REGARDS AMIR'S REACTION TO SUHAYM'S SUCCESSFUL FACEDOWN,
KAMEL SAID AMIR WAS REMARKABLY UNBOTHERED, SINCE AMIR HAD
DEVELOPED OVER PAST COUPLE YEARS AMAZING FACILITY OF MAKING
LIKE AN OSTRICH. KAMEL ASSERTED HOWEVER, THAT HE DID NOT WISH
TO LEAVE IMPRESSION THAT AMIR HAD LOST HIS CLOUT AND AUTHORITY,
WHICH STILL RECOGNIZED AS SUPREME WITHIN THE RULING FAMILY;
NEVERTHELESS, SUHAYM'S SUCCESS CERTAINLY WAS AN ERODING FACTOR
AND MIGHT ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO TEST AMIR'S WILL. KAMEL COMMENTED
THAT THIS INCIDENT ADDED TO INTERNAL DISARRAY. HE REITERATED
FAMILIAR REFRAIN THAT AMIR MUST TAKE DECISIVE ACTION BY NAMING
CROWN PRINCE AND MOVING ON GOVT REORGANIZATION AND OTHER INTERNAL
AND PERSONNEL REFORMS WITH DETERMINATION AND DISPATCH IF HE
WISHES TO STEM THE DETERIORATION OF HIS AUTFRITY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, MINISTER COUNSELORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DOHA01194
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760425-0252
From: DOHA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761151/aaaabrxm.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 76 DOHA 1184, 76 DOHA 1174
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by greenet>; APPROVED <13 OCT 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QATAR INTERNAL AFFAIRS: FOREIGN MINISTER RESUMES FUNCTIONS AND APPARENTLY FACES DOWN AMIR
TAGS: PINT, QA, (THANI, SUHAYM BIN HAMAD AL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006